

Monument Avenue, 2800 and 2900 Blocks  
2800 (odd and even) and 2900 (odd)  
blocks of Monument Avenue  
Richmond  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1307

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MONUMENT AVENUE, 2800 AND 2900 BLOCKS

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Location: 2800 (odd and even) and 2900 (odd) blocks of Monument Avenue, between Boulevard and Sheppard Street, Richmond, Virginia.

History and Description:

Derived from the Sheppard estate, the first block west of Boulevard gives a different impression of Monument Avenue than those blocks to the east. Boulevard is a dividing line for Monument, not just because it is a major intersecting street that slices through the avenue at an oblique angle, but also because its streetscape presents a different image than the eastern Monument that was developed earlier. The block between Boulevard and Sheppard especially marks this new order of Monument Avenue. Although the residential use of the block is in keeping with others along the avenue, 85 percent of all the buildings are apartments. The apartment complexes dominate their lots, leaving little front yard and even less side yard to beautify. As on all of Monument Avenue, the tree-lined median strip provides a grassy retreat to residents of this high-density neighborhood.

On the south side of the block, Colonial Street runs northward, dead-ending at Monument, separating the southern side of the block into two uneven parcels. The eastern parcel has lots oriented toward Boulevard with an alley at the rear, and only one lot faces north on Monument. The western parcel is the 2900 block. On the north side, with one exception, the block is a continuous strip of three-story apartments. Lots on both sides of the street are about the same size, although there are more buildings on the north side. The western edge of this block terminates in a different manner than it began--at right angles.

According to the Crawford and Redd Plat of 1901, the land was platted as an extension of Franklin Street. On the south side of the street there were eleven lots just west of Deep Run Street (now Colonial), and two on its east side, for a total of thirteen lots. There were thirteen connected lots on the north side. Lots directly west of Boulevard on the north side of the street were originally platted to face east onto Boulevard and had a north-south alley at the rear, but were later developed as lots fronting Monument with one alley running parallel to the avenue.

The north and south sides of the 2800 block developed at about the same pace. Buildings were constructed here beginning in 1916; eight were erected by 1920, with both sides of the block equally represented. A rush of construction activity took place here in the mid-1920s, especially at the northwest corner where seven buildings were erected between 1926 and 1928, signaling the development of the block, but not its maturity. The lot at No. 2907 was empty until 1960.

Although there are many apartment types represented, the ever-present column is a prominent design element. Some of the designs are doubled and tripled, such as the pair at Nos. 2810 and 2812, and the trio at Nos. 2820, 2822, and 2824. The Greenwood Apartments at No. 2810 and the Seminole Apartments at No. 2812 have a central bay and entry flanked by two three-story porches. A wide overhanging hipped roof links the triple-deck porches at the roofline.

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and shelters the entrance bay. The distinct porches with short box columns and square balustrades along with triangular knee braces at the eaves give a Craftsman-like spirit to these apartments not previously seen on Monument Avenue. They were built in 1918-19 by builders Davis Brothers, which acquired this parcel with 100' frontage on Monument for \$19,000 and built these two apartment buildings at an estimated cost of \$50,000. In 1920, they sold an "apartment house containing six units" to Greenwood Apartment Corporation at an undisclosed amount. The apartments must have filled an immediate housing need since all the units were leased the first year following construction. The city directory listed six male tenants in 1919: two salesmen, an investor, a hatter, an attorney, and one without a given occupation.

The Davis Brothers also designed and built the apartments at Nos. 2820, 2822, and 2824. These Mediterranean-style apartments have two-part compositions: one bay is punctuated by windows with pent roofs and balconies, while the companion bay projects to form a sheltered, arcaded porch of three stories. Ceramic tile covering low-pitched hipped roofs and stucco exteriors complement the architectural style of these apartments, which were built between 1924 and 1926. The Davis Brothers acquired the site for these apartments in 1921, purchasing a 90' x 130' parcel from Adelaide W. Guigon and her husband. Davis Brothers applied for a building permit on May 9, 1924, to build three flats at an estimated cost of \$60,000, or \$20,000 each. The apartment buildings were designed as a complex of three units each with a "private court in common" at the rear that was bordered by ten garage units. Construction completed, the Davis Brothers sold the apartments to Harry and Clara Wallerstein on August 4, 1925. The Wallersteins owned the property for five years. Their first leases at No. 2824 were to Margaret Wilson, widow of R. B. Wilson; Thomas M. Anderson, Jr., a travel supervisor for the Export Leaf Tobacco Company; and Gaston M. Jacobs, a clothing salesman at Jacobs and Levy. Monument Avenue was a familiar and evidently desirable neighborhood to all these tenants. Wilson formerly resided at 2512 Monument, Anderson had lived at 2606 Monument, and Jacobs' business colleagues, Raphael Levy and Abram L. Jacobs, both had houses on Monument Avenue.

Of the seven other apartments on the north side of the street, six incorporate porches with columns and balustrades. All have Colonial Revival characteristics, but apartments at Nos. 2826 and 2828 are smaller buildings than those at Nos. 2800, 2806, 2816, and 2832. The narrow lots at Nos. 2826 and 2828 force these three-story apartments to take a rectangular form with narrow front, giving them a town house-like appearance. No. 2826 is a 25'-5" wide building on a 28'-wide lot. The 1919 permit lists the architect as Sitterding-Carneal-Davis, but the owner and builder was Robert D. Powell. Apartments at Nos. 2800, 2806, and 2816 share the same delineation of a wide central block flanked by pavilions. The Monument, at No. 2800, and the Jackson, No. 2806, are similar to the apartment at 2616 Monument Ave., previously described. Those at Nos. 2800 and 2806 were built less than two years apart, the Monument finished first, in 1917. W. E. Purcell, Jr., owned, designed and built the Cheston apartment building at No. 2816 for \$60,000 in 1924-25. Like the others at the east end of the block, it is quite wide: 57' on a 60'-wide lot. Pyramidal roofs crown the pavilions, which are connected by an elliptical porch with two-story columns and filleted cornice. A similar design is found up the street at No. 3012. The apartment building at No. 2832, the Montclair, is similar to these apartments in form, but does not have projecting side wings. It was built about 1924, again by Purcell, but for a different owner.

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Another variation of a three-story apartment building with a curved porch and two-story columns is across the street at **No. 2805 Monument**. The Anne-Frances, built 1919-20, is one of the most palatial structures on the avenue. It is isolated on a trapezoidal lot at the southeast corner of Monument and Colonial that is 80' in front and 100' at the rear. This nine-bay-wide apartment building of buff-colored brick has a rusticated ground floor with arcaded entry and arched windows. The base swells outward at the three centralized bays to support a two-story elliptical portico formed by paired columns and single columns, all with Corinthian capitals, and a wide frieze at the cornice.

The Anne-Frances was designed by Max Ruehrmund for owner Columbus K. Lassiter and named after Lassiter's wife. Lassiter, who purchased the site in 1918 for \$13,000, lived at 3016 Monument and later 2910. At his death his children inherited the property and retained ownership until 1958, when they sold it to Eleanor White Gee. The apartments were converted into condominiums in the early 1980s. Early tenants of this apartment building were business leaders. Some were even principal partners of firms, like Grover C. Dula, president of Westmoreland Candy Company, and president and general manager of Dula Motor Corporation; and Pannill Rucker, owner of Rucker Tobacco Company. Angus O. Swink, manager of the Virginia and D.C. Atlantic Life Insurance Company, resided at 2614 Monument Ave. before moving to the Anne-Frances, and Lottie Cannon moved here from her home at 2340 Monument.

There are other apartments on the south side of the block, but none so majestic as the Anne-Frances. Galt Apartments (now Bernie Apartments) at **No. 2903** was built about 1917 and features two-level giant-columned porches on either side of a central entrance. The Southampton Apartment building, **No. 2923**, was constructed in 1922 and has a center two-story porch with third-floor terrace flanked by pavilions. M. E. Wright was the architect.

Unusual apartment buildings are those at Nos. 2905 and 2830, which disguise themselves as houses rather than proclaim their identity as multi-family spaces. Builders of **No. 2905**, who must have expected this block to develop like other residential blocks east of Boulevard, responded by building an inconspicuous town house-type apartment building that would harmonize with single-family dwellings on the horizon. Built in 1916, this was the first building on the block, so no residential pattern had been established. More difficult to explain is the two-story residence at **No. 2830** built in 1927. It is dwarfed by tall neighbors on either side and is the only two-story building on the north side of the block. This undersized Colonial Revival apartment building of three bays with a side hall features a pediment supported by fluted pilasters and a fanlight at the door. Brickwork of English bond, slate shingles on the side-gable roof, and jack arches above windows combine with the scale of this building to give it a domestic character like no other apartments on this block. A fence of brick piers and iron grills borders the front yard of this residence, designed by Duncan Lee for Rosa B. Hexter. Hexter, a buyer for Miller & Rhoads department store, lived next door at 2828 Monument Ave. in the Rosemary Apartments. She owned the two-unit apartment at **No. 2830** until her death in 1936. Her executors awarded it to the Miller & Rhoads Employment Association as her will directed, although that association sold the property in 1949.

The site was included in a parcel known as Monument Avenue Park and subdivided into fifty-one lots that were granted by a widower, M. M. Blacker, to Greater Richmond Realty

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Company in 1912, and later obtained by Advance Realty Corporation in 1920. Greater Richmond Realty established numerous covenants on the land before Hexter purchased it in 1925. The restrictions included that: (1) persons of African descent were prohibited from occupying, leasing, or purchasing the property; (2) no liquor could be sold on the land for twenty-one years; (3) building orientation had to conform to the layout and scheme of Monument Avenue Park lots as established on plats; (4) the land could not be used in ways that would "constitute a nuisance or injure the value of neighboring lots"; (5) a 25' setback from the street must be observed, but did not apply to porches or bay windows; (6) houses fronting Monument Avenue had to cost \$6,000 or more; (7) houses built on Grace Street had to cost \$4,000 or more; and (8) other houses built elsewhere had to cost \$3,000 or more.

Hexter's apartment at No. 2830 relates to other small-scale buildings on the block, also in the Colonial Revival vein. The only houses here are on the south side of the street, at Nos. 2911, 2915, and 2917. All are similar in massing and setting at two-and-a-half stories with dormers and central entrances, and situated at the crest of a berm. The houses at Nos. 2915 and 2917 were built as a pair in 1921, designed by Otis K. Asbury for Edgar Allen, Jr. Both are 27' wide on 35'-wide lots, and 23' high. Despite their similar size and plan (both have central doors and probably identical layouts), they are different styles: No. 2917 is a brick Colonial Revival-style town house, and No. 2915 is a stucco-covered Dutch Colonial style.

The last structure on the block represents a striking contrast to others. Built in 1960, more than half a century after the other buildings, the apartment at No. 2907 is an example of late first-time building on Monument rather than in-fill construction that replaced existing architecture. Its contemporary cross-gable design of one-and-a-half stories causes it to look out of place amid the older buildings on the block.

Sources of Information:

Richmond City Directories.

Richmond Building Permits: 6151, 6219 (2810 Monument); 12730 (2816 Monument); 13117 (2824 Monument); 5457 (2826 Monument); 17656 (2830 Monument); 14021 (2832 Monument); 6926, 7050 (2805 Monument); 8109, 8107 (2915-17 Monument); 9062 (2923 Monument).

Deed Books: **2810 Monument:** Henrico Co. Deed Book 176B/95, 215C/117, 230B/159, 237B/235, 193D/213, 219A/396, 227A/109, 247B/243, 260D/297, 433D/487, 638A/647, 643D/246, 686C/556, 638A/650, 699B/738, 722/431, 807/958; **2824 Monument:** Henrico Co. Deed Book 176B/26,95; 218D/281, 275A/67, 313C/194, 321D/370,367, 369C/173, 396A/104, 437D/321, 563C/284, 562B/183, 574D/253, 697C/462, 719/849, 722/1544, 710/1773, 755/1494, 817/493; **2828 Monument:** 200B/305; 218C/388; **2830 Monument:** Henrico Co. Deed Book 194B/29, 261C/488, 322C/207, 517C/22, 518D/543, 641A/677, 198/1250; **2805 Monument:** 205C/60, 199B/468, 217D/410, 249B/65, 408A/338, Will Books 19/492 and 113/108; 590A/425, 770/840,842, 805/1491.

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Project Information:

This documentation of Monument Avenue was undertaken in summer 1991 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division of the National Park Service, Washington, D.C., under the general direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief. The project was sponsored by the Monument Avenue Centennial Committee, Millie Jones and Ceci Amrhein, co-chairpersons, and Sylvia Summers, director of development. Funding was provided by the Historic Monument Avenue and Fan District Foundation, the City of Richmond, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, the Historic Richmond Foundation, the F. M. Kirby Foundation, Inc., and the Robert G. Cabell III and Maude Morgan Cabell Foundation.

HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland directed the project and edited this historical report. Kathy Edwards (University of California at Berkeley) was the field supervisor; Esme Howard (Yale University) and Toni Prawl (University of Missouri) were the team historians. Jonathan C. Spodek, AIA, produced architectural drawings and Jack Boucher took the photographs. The team's work resulted in the publication Monument Avenue, of which the report on this one block forms only a small portion. Researchers are referred to that volume for more information.